



United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

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# NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **MASSACHUSETTS FARMERS INVITED TO HARVEST REWARDS FROM THEIR LAND STEWARDSHIP**

**Connecticut River and Narragansett Bay watershed farmers invited to sign-up for the federal  
Conservation Security Program April 18 – May 16.**

AMHERST, Mass. (April 7, 2008) – Massachusetts farmers with land in the Narragansett Bay and middle Connecticut River watersheds and who practice good soil and water conservation are encouraged to contact their local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office to determine if they are eligible to sign-up for the Conservation Security Program (CSP). Sign-up begins April 18 and continues through May 16.

CSP is a voluntary conservation program that supports ongoing stewardship of private, agricultural working lands and rewards those producers who are meeting the highest standards of conservation and environmental management on their operations.

Lands that are eligible include cropland, orchards, vineyards, hayland, pasture-land, cranberry bogs and maple sugar lots. To qualify for CSP, farms must maintain current conservation practices that are appropriate for their lands. Landowners must be able to provide documentation of their stewardship work.

Farmers will be invited to attend information sessions now being scheduled. Dates and locations, along with additional information on CSP and a self-assessment workbook, are available on-line at [www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov). Farmers may also call or visit their local USDA service center; locations are listed on-line at <http://offices.usda.gov> or in the phone book under Federal Government, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

CSP is offered nationwide on a rotational basis in as many watersheds as funding allows. This year, farms in the Connecticut River and Narragansett Bay watersheds, which span parts of Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Rhode Island, are invited to apply for CSP.

Payments can include three components: 1) an annual stewardship component for the base level of conservation treatment, 2) an annual component for maintenance of existing conservation practices, and 3) an enhancement component for exceptional conservation effort. Enhancement activities could include limited pesticide applications, renewable energy generation, and widening existing riparian forest buffers for restoring critical stream habitat.

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To apply for CSP, NRCS asks potential participants to complete a CSP self-assessment workbook – available on the web or from local NRCS offices – to find out if their operation meets the requirements of the program and qualifies for program participation.

The self-assessment process is completed using a self-screening questionnaire for each land use to be enrolled. When this process is completed, the producer submits the CSP workbook to the local NRCS office during the sign-up period and meets with NRCS personnel to go over any additional needed documentation. NRCS will then determine if eligibility requirements are met and provide options for the producer's decision on enrollment category placement.

NRCS held the first CSP sign-up in 2004. This announcement brings the number of watersheds enrolled to 331 across the nation, covering 247.7 million acres that have been eligible for the program.

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**NOTE TO EDITORS AND REPORTERS:**

If you would like to include local contact information for your readers, please cite the office below that serves your area. If you have any questions, please call the contact above or your local office below.

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